

The Indus Valley.

9

languages, who differ considerably amongst themselves. As, 101
however, there is no one name which will properly apply to
the peoples and countries in question, it will be perhaps conve-
nient to retain the names of Dard and Dardistan when speak-
ing collectively of the tribes in question and the countries they
inhabit.

The first 50 miles of the Kohistan of the Indus Valley
is inhabited by tribes of cognate race, who still speak a variety 197
of dialects and languages. Their distribution seems to show 563
that they represent tribes who formerly lived apart, but have
been forced by circumstances into contiguity. In addition
to their own languages, Pushtoo is universally spoken, and
they present the appearance of a decadent race in process of
absorption by one of greater vigour. The country is somewhat 134
poorer and less fertile than that already described. Long in- 311
tervals of barren sand intervene between the patches of culti-
vation, the villages are smaller, much cultivable land lies idle;
and all agriculture is of a slovenly description. The men are 142
small and clean-limbed, with dark complexions, quick eye and
sharp features. Women are not secluded from the public 562
gaze. Men shave their heads in a manner more suggestive of 302
Hindoos, and many strange customs still linger amongst them, 771
showing that Mahomedan fanaticism is not incompatible
with ignorance of the Koran. In some of the more inacces-
sible villages idolatry can hardly yet be said to be extinct.
Instead of the loose ample garments of the Pathan, the
men wear tight-fitting clothes, like the natives of Hindustan.

Some 15 miles above the mouth of the Kanra-Ghorbund
Valley, on the right bank of the Indus, is the extensive but 361
thinly-populated valley of Doobeyr, which extends nearly due 162
north for a distance of about 40 miles. Five miles from the
Indus the village of Ranooliyah, 200 houses, is reached;
above this the habitations are scattered broadcast over the
whole valley, instead of being collected into villages. The
only village of any size is Jarg, 100 houses, 6 miles above
Ranooliyah. From the head of the valley a road leads into
the Swat Valley near Payetch, and another into Kandia.
The valley can furnish about 1,500 fighting men, and the
ground, where cultivable, is said to yield excellent crops.

On the opposite bank of the Indus and above the mouth 628
of the Doobeyr Valley are the neighbouring and rival com-
munities of Koli and Palus, which are often spoken of as
forming a single tribe. They were formerly close allies, but
a feud, arising out of a dispute concerning some land to which
[i.e. the Country of the Pathans - Analyst]

133

[361]
[311]
[137]

From the place called Bangla a road for Astor and Gilgit leaves the valley and rises the ridge on the north; this has of late years come to be considered on the whole the easiest route to those places; the Pass just above (called Kamri) is little over 13,000 feet, and the way is shorter by some five miles than the other. But the other is the one we will follow, continuing in the valley. There are now no more villages, though at one place, called Minmarg, a little buckwheat is grown (at an elevation of about 10,500 feet) by villagers from below, who come there in the summer, but the crop with difficulty ripens. At this place, and farther up the valley to the south-east, are moraine-mounds of old glaciers. The last halting-place on this side the watershed is at Burzil. Up to here there was no sign of a Tibetan climate; and as far as I, not being a botanist, could tell, there was the same vegetation, of forest, thick grass, and flowers, as in Kashmir.

487

133

At Burzil two roads part; one (spoken of in the last chapter) leads north-eastwards across the Deosai plateau to Skārdū, the other, going due north, will bring us to Astor. Following this latter, we rise, not very steeply, a height of about 2000 feet in five or six miles; the Pass, which is called Dorikun, is 13,500 feet high; it is not a defile, but a neck between the two parts of a rocky ridge; this is of granite, and the peaks here have a character not uncommon with that rock—they are massive in general form, but serrated and jagged at the uppermost edge; soon beyond the rock changes to slate and altered slate. Having crossed the Pass we are in the basin of the Indus; we are on the eastern branch of the Astor River. The valley in which this flows we now descend.

This Pass is crossed on the fourth march from Gurez; after gradually descending for three more marches, down the narrow valley enclosed by not very steep mountains, we come to where the eastern branch of the Astor stream falls in; it was along this latter that the other road would have led us that branched to the left some way back; then another few miles and we reach Astor. Of the two Passes crossed by these two roads the Dorikun Pass is the easier, and, although rather higher, is more practicable when under snow; it opens in the spring a few weeks earlier, and it

137 and the pine-forest is less extensive, while spruce-fir has become
133 rare. Birch is found nearly up to 12,000 feet, and *Pinus excelsa*
at 11,300. Some of the hill-sides have great stretches of birch-
wood, which, as I saw them in autumn, made a glorious blaze of
yellow, from the valley-bottom far up the mountain, enveloping
detached woods of dark pine.

[36] Coming down the valley we reach traces of cultivation at the
level of 10,000 feet. First are detached hamlets and small vil-
lages, bare, with no trees round them. Then, at Rattū, are some
apricot trees; at the next place are some small walnuts; while at
Chagām, which is 8500 feet, are many fine walnut trees, and from
there onwards the villages are mostly well shaded by fruit-trees.

175 But in that upper part it is chiefly traces of former cultiva-
7-1 tion that one sees; they are enough to show that crops will grow
311 and ripen; but the fields are waste, the hamlets deserted. In
[6] most of the mountain-tracts we have hitherto gone over the
population has increased nearly up to the limit of land available;
but here is room for hundreds of settlers. This state of things
was brought about by the raids of the people of Chilās. The
Chilāsīs are a Dārd race inhabiting a long valley on the west of
[13] Diyāmīr or Nangā Parbat. Until about 1850 they used to make
occasional expeditions for plunder into this Astor Valley. Often
they came over the Mazenū Pass to reach these higher parts,
while for Astor itself, which they also attacked, they came round
by the Hatū Pass and Dūiyān. The plunder they came for was
[56] cattle and people to make slaves of; their captives they do not
sell, but they keep them for their own service, making use of
them to take their flocks and herds to pasture. But since it
would be almost impossible to keep grown men as their slaves at
such work, where opportunities for escape would be plentiful,
they used to kill the men and carry away only the women and
the young people.

It was these raids that determined Maharaja Gulāb Singh to
send a punitive expedition against Chilās; this he did in 1851
or 1852, I am not sure which; one force went direct from
Kashmir, and one advanced by this Mazenū Pass. The Dogrās
were in great straits for provisions, as the communications were
[i.e. Astor Valley - - Anahy - -]

right side of the snowy Pass, and is always ready to advance to Gilgit if required.

I know very little of the history of Astor. Bernier, who wrote about the year 1660, in enumerating the countries that border Kashmir, speaks of the territories of *Raja Gamon*. Now from geographical position I infer that this was the ruler of Astor. When the Sikhs held Kashmir, the Astor Raja was tributary to them; he had become so without any force having been sent; for a time he remained in quiet. But a curious thing happened. When Wazir Lakpat (who was lieutenant of Zurāwar Singh, who was servant of Raja Gulāb Singh, who was a tributary of the Sikhs) was victorious in Skārdū, he came over the Harpo Lā and invaded Astor. Lakpat besieged the Astor fort for four months; at the end of which time it was given up for want of provisions, and the Raja was taken away prisoner to Skārdū; and this though he was on terms of friendship and (in a degree) dependent on the Sikh Governor of Kashmir. At last, representations on the subject went to Lāhor, and from there Gulāb Singh received directions to desist from interfering with Astor, so the Raja was sent back. But not long afterwards the Sikhs themselves from Kashmir required a passage through the Astor territory on their way to Gilgit (as will be related in Chapter XIX.), and not only so, but they required to make their communications sure; with this object a Sikh post was placed at Astor, and from that time the independence of the Raja diminished; now there is a titular Raja, for whose subsistence some provision is made, whether by pension or from land I do not know.

At Astor and for many miles on there is one general character of the valley; at the bottom it is very narrow; the river is quite confined between the ends of great spurs from the lofty mountain-ridges on both sides; the cultivation is on very small spaces, usually some hundreds of feet above the valley-bottom. The hill-sides are partly broken into cliffs and partly of a smooth surface, grown over with grass in tufts, and with bushes of pencil-cedar scattered over, while in parts sheltered from the sun *Pinus*

175
648

[721]

[643]

135
311 ●
137

133 *excelsa* grows, of small size, and makes a thin forest; above, the mountains often rise to lofty rocky and snowy peaks.

Below Astor, as well as in the higher part of the valley, are deserted lands which again tell of the raids of the Chilāsīs. This part should be a country of fruit-trees, but when the lands were deserted these perished for want of water; the old watercourses have now come to be in such a state that it would take much labour again to bring the water over the fields. On some of the terraced fields I saw trees growing which must have been 100 years old; this shows that for long the same state of hostility and insecurity had continued.

123 A mile or two below the village of Dashkin, on turning a spur, we open a tract of a character different from what we have lately seen—a wide valley, somewhat of the amphitheatre form, but with the base also sloping; over both the sides and the base are extensive pine forests, through which we contour, avoiding the broken ground below, where among rocks the river flows; stretching back at a gentle slope the ground rises above the limit of forest to a ridge easy of access, about 14,000 feet high; over this ridge is a path by which the Chilāsīs have before now irrupted.

[137] In this forest grows the edible pine (*P. Gerardiana*), this being the only other locality in the territories, besides Pādar, where I have met with it.

One other hollow round which we travel, and we get to the last spur, that which overhangs the valley of the Indus. It is a sharp spur-ridge, the Pass over which bears the name of Hatū Pir. From this we look straight across the Indus Valley on to a great steep mass of mountains, the greater part of the surface of which is bare, either rock or talus, only in the upper part pine-trees are dotted here and there; a ravine comes down in front, by the side of which is a small patch of cultivated land—the little village of Thalicha. The river Indus winds through what, in a large way, is a plain between two mountain-ridges, but is really made of sloping fans on both sides—stony tracts—below the level of which flows the river, winding and leaving little stretches of sand in the hollows of its bends.

From Hatū Pir there is a great descent, of about 5000 feet, / 33
by a zigzag road, steep and rough. We do not immediately reach
the Indus Valley, but we go first to where the end of the Hatū
spur nearly meets the mountain on the opposite side of the Astor
River, leaving but a narrow channel for the water. Here the [491]
Astor River is spanned by two rope-bridges, made of birch twigs,
and by a wooden bridge, over which ponies can be taken; a tower [712]
has been built that commands the passage; the position is held
by some forty soldiers, who keep a good look-out. The place is a
strange one; the soldiers live in caves in the rock; the rock
overhangs, so as to keep off the sunshine for the greater part of
the day; still the air becomes burning hot in summer; in
winter, though no snow falls, the cold is somewhat severe.

Here crossing and following down the Astor River we soon
debouch into the Indus Valley and find ourselves on the stony
alluvial tracts, over nine miles of which, with small ups and downs,
we have to go before reaching Bawanjl.

BAWANJL

This is a spot where at one time was a good deal of culti- [311]
vation, and it is likely that fruit-trees once shaded it; but 175
during the wars of two or three generations back it was laid waste 712
and became entirely depopulated, and nought but bare ground
remained. At that earlier time it was inhabited by Dārds, but
was ruled, as I am informed, from Rondū; it was by Sulaimān
Shāh's invasion that it was laid waste.* At the present time
Bawanjl has a very small area under cultivation, but the place is
of some importance as a military post, since on the holding of
it depends the passage of the Indus on the way to Gilgit. There
is a fort which was built by the Dogrās; it is manned by about
seventy men, and as many more are in barracks outside. There [497]
is here also a prison, where a gang of incorrigible Kashmiri horse-
stealers are detained; these men enjoy during the day some
liberty for cultivating their plots of land. The valley 132
here is warm and dry; with irrigation two crops can always be [54]
raised.

* See Chapter XII.

1888]

ASTOR AND ITS RAJA

19

country, and close under whose shadow we were marching,—magnificent views, giving an overpowering impression of towering height. Locally it¹ is called Deomir, “the mountain of the gods,” a fitting name. 133 [103]

The last few marches showed miles of terraced land out of cultivation, the result of the incursions of the murderous Chilas who raided from the Indus valley. In a country where every foot of cultivation has to be won with heavy toil from nature, nothing appeals so to your heart as the sight of deserted land and ruined homesteads. 311 ●

Finally, after thirteen days' marching, we reached Astor, which used to be the capital of a kingdom important enough in a small way in the Hindu-Kush. The Sikhs absorbed it, all that remains of its former glories being a fort now held by the Dogras. 361 439

Astor boasts of a bazaar, the first met with since leaving Kashmir; beyond it there are only two, at Gilgit and Chitral. Most of the trade was at this time done by itinerant traders from Koli and Palas in the Indus valley, who brought goods from India, taking back gold-dust and products of Central Asia, and who penetrated into the remotest glens. The more peaceful state of things which we introduced has given a start to Gilgit, which is now becoming the emporium of this portion of the Hindu-Kush.

I here made the acquaintance of Bahadur Khan, Raja of Astor, the representative of the old ruling race, an old gentleman whose honesty, intimate knowledge of the country, and connection with all the local rajas were to be of the greatest value to me on more than one occasion. Deprived of his kingdom and very poor, living on a small grant of land 643
+ [Nanga Parbat mountain -- Analyst]

1888]

DANGEROUS BOATS

31

this year, a couple of boat-loads of men being lost. 000
Two years afterwards Robertson lost the whole of his kit, specially got together for his exploration of Kafiristan, a couple of horses and about twenty men going down at the same time, owing to the officer in charge having allowed the boat to be overloaded. Luckily for Robertson he was not there, having gone up-stream to look at a bridge site for me, but it was an expensive way of having the lesson rubbed in that you should never in wild countries permit other people, however well-meaning, to take charge of your baggage.

The road led up from the Indus through a bare plain to the Sai valley and passed through thousands of acres of once cultivated land, now almost entirely abandoned. We halted to breakfast and to pass the heat of the day at Damot, a village at the mouth of the Damot nullah, famous for its markhor ground, in an orchard which was a great natural harbour bound together by countless vines. Amongst these, making at a distance a lovely picture, little naked boys played and swung on loops of vine; close at hand they were too dirty to be even picturesque.

We passed on the road a group of Balti coolies, who threw themselves at my horse's feet in a body, and prayed for help. There was nothing I could do for them at the moment, though the mere fact that I enquired into their grievances had, as I afterwards heard, a good effect, and got them dismissed to their homes, but Robertson stopped behind to see what a little doctoring could do. It was not much; the men, fifty-three in number, were the remains of a body of a hundred coolies who had left Baltistan six

D
487
311
361

D
524

K
708
164

487 The approach to Gilgit is rather fine. The road
311 runs up the flank of a huge alluvial fan several hundred feet in depth, where it bursts out of the hill-side, and which stretches a mile into the valley. From the east as you approached you saw then no trace of cultivation, only line after line of ruined terraced
346 fields bare and brown. High up on the main hill-side, visible for miles, stands a Buddhist tower, the
132 land-mark which must for centuries have welcomed the traveller to Gilgit. The extraordinary dryness of the climate, with its average rainfall of under a couple of inches a year, has kept it, ancient as it is, in a state of almost perfect preservation.

241 From the highest point where the road crosses
361 the fan there is a splendid view of the triple peaks of Rakapushi, the great mountain above Nagar to the north, and the Gilgit oasis bursts into view. This is a mass of cultivation five or six miles long by a mile wide at the widest, studded with villages and covered with fruit-trees, the whole irrigated and depending for its water on one stream which enters the valley at the western end.

643 I was met on the road at intervals by all the
576 important men in Gilgit; the lower the status of the official the further he came out, according to Eastern custom, to receive me. The rajas of Punyal, the country tributary to Kashmir, which is the continuation of the valley of the Gilgit river towards Chitral, refugee princes from Yasin, driven out by the Mehtar of Chitral, local wazirs and Kashmir officials met me one after the other, the culminating point being my reception by the Governor of Gilgit and the officers of the Committee directing the operations on the

361

132

[311]

Mastuj we found a horrible place. The valley is much broader than usual, and at one time probably held much cultivation; there is but little now. The fort is close to the junction of the Laspur valley, down which we had come, and the main valley, and we camped a mile beyond it, at the far end of the polo ground. Mastuj is about the windiest place I know; being at the junction of three large valleys there is always a wind, generally a gale.

541

[367]

411

In Afzul's territory we first saw the Chitralis show off on the "janáli," the exercise ground, which belongs to every fair-sized village. We used to be taken to this before reaching our camp, and had to sit for some time, either on our horses or on the ground, watching various feats of arms. A high pole is set up, on the top of which are fixed gourds, sometimes silver globes full of dust, and man after man dashes by at full gallop and fires at these marks. They load their guns as a rule with a cylinder of wood instead of a bullet, though a handful of fine pebbles, or a charge of shot if they can get it, does not come amiss. The latter practice is not regarded as quite fair. The mark is occasionally hit, the prize going to the lucky marksman. Sometimes you are treated to an exhibition of archery, the riders flying by and shooting at a mark on a mound of earth. The bows are very strong, being made of markhor horn, but the shooting is, as a rule, of the poorest. This sort of thing, though interesting when you first see it, becomes very wearisome when you are constantly called on to sit in a hot sun for an hour or more after a long march to watch it. But the humours of the scene were various.

000

Afzul fairly took my breath away one day during

644 were told of its wonders, how it could turn out
 484 fourteen lakhs of rupees a day—a lakh is a hundred
 177 thousand—how it coined every day in the year
 [662] without cessation. The Kashmir officer with us, with
 what object it was not necessary to enquire (every
 man in his position must intrigue, and has an axe
 of his own to grind), capped these stories by inform-
 ing the Chitralis that our rulers never were at a loss
 for the white metal, as we could turn copper into
 silver.

000 Altogether I soon saw that my prospects of satisfy-
 ing everybody, or for the matter of that, anybody,
 were remote. My difficulties would have been much
 lightened in Chitral had Nizam and Afrul gone
 through, during their visit to India, a course of
 sight-seeing at some big military centre. Twenty
 thousand men on parade, "horse, foot, and dragoons,"
 would have given them and their headmen a much
 more intelligent appreciation of what the power of
 the Government of India meant than could wander-
 ing about cotton and jute mills, or being driven
 through foul and crowded bazaar.

361 Between Mastuj and Chitral we found at Sanoghar,
 • 311 Buni, and other places, miles of splendid cultivation,
 and we saw above us, on the right bank of the river,
 487 the extensive fields of the Murikho valley. But
 725 for the most part the road was, as before, extremely
 difficult; the last couple of marches it was purposely
 left in the worst condition, running through gorges
 and along cliffs on rickety brackets which could be
 destroyed in a moment.

133 Glacial action is again well marked below Mastuj,
 the road running over huge masses of rock, rounded,

241

311

000

The Lutkú valley, through which our road ran, is famous in Chitral, and rightly so, for its cultivation, and we were more struck by its wealth on our return than on our march up. Riding up you often see nothing but a series of walls, the retaining walls of the fields; coming downhill the whole of the cultivation is spread before you. Every inch of the ground is utilised, the soil being cleared wherever possible, the stones taken off it and piled in huge heaps, and every large rock which is too big to move has stones stacked upon it. The fruit of the valley is renowned, peaches, apples, pears, and splendid grapes abound; the grain crops could not be finer, and every village is embowered in huge walnut trees, truly a land flowing with milk and honey! It had its drawbacks for the native traveller. We came across a *kafila en route* from Bajour to Badakshan, and found one of the Hindu traders bewailing the loss of a fine mule killed by a fall from a cliff, the second lost since they had left Chitral, and half the load washed away in the stream. Several roads lead from the Lutkú valley to Kafiristan up side valleys, and right and left of the points where the valleys joined were well-known places of slaughter, where Kafirs might be expected suddenly to dash out of the tamarisk thickets, and swoop on any caravan not heavily guarded, or on any isolated man. Some of these side valleys were very beautiful from the distance, particularly one leading by the Shui pass into Kafiristan. We had gone to visit some more hot springs which came out some hundred feet or so above the road, and the view up the side valley was lovely, a sea of autumn colour in which the gold of the

776 without its note, no warlike expedition could be
 expected to succeed which started without the fairy
 791 approval. But if I never heard the fairy drum, I
 have seen what few will ever have the chance of
 seeing again, the Dainyal, the diviner or soothsayer
 inspired by the fairies. Dainyals are usually women,
 but men sometimes become possessed, and the seers
 are seemingly of all ages. The one I saw was a
 buxom married village girl of about twenty, held
 in great estimation in the village and district on
 account of her supernatural powers, and ruling her
 household with a rod of iron.

312 I had ridden up the Bagrot valley, down which
 a stream from the southern glaciers of Rakapushi
 reaches the Gilgit river, in order to see what could
 be done to improve the water channels, which were
 carried along very difficult cliffs, and which the people
 only kept in even partial repair with the greatest
 727 labour. It was a melancholy ride. The valley had
 been raided years ago by the Yasin ruler, and some
 two-thirds of the population carried off into slavery
 or killed, and the traces of the tragedy were recognis-
 [51] able on all sides. At the mouth of the Bagrot valley
 lay hundreds of acres of land gone out of cultivation,
 the terraced fields and the raised irrigation channels
 still intact, their lichen-grown and sunburnt stones
 showing that water had not run over them for decades.
 Further up the valley half, and sometimes two-thirds,
 of the village land lay in the same state, the dead and
 gone vineyards easily recognisable by the small stone
 vats, which had once run full of foaming must; the
 flat stones above them, on which the grapes had been
 trodden out, and the little stone runnels, through
 which the juice had poured, were still in their places.